

United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
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In Reply To:

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To: All Montana/Dakotas Employees
From: State Director
Subject: Reports of Survey

Employees are responsible for caring for all Government property as though it was their own. Employees are assigned some property items to perform their duties. These items may include radios, cell phones, computers, chainsaws, and Government vehicles.

If Government property is lost, stolen, or damaged, employees must inform their supervisor who, in turn, will report it to the local property officer. The property office will complete a Report of Survey for submission to the Board of Survey or local survey officer.

The Boards of Survey are established by the Departmental Manual and exist in each BLM State Office, and in the Denver and Washington Offices. Their job is to investigate loss of, or damage to, Government property, and make determinations about the financial liability of the employee involved.

The Board of Survey's investigation and determination of liability are based on the following:

1. The accident report, if applicable, which usually includes the Safety Management Information System (SMIS) report; law enforcement reports, if available; witness statements, and the SF-91, "Report of Motor Vehicle Damage;"
2. A statement from the supervisor and his/her recommendations concerning liability;
3. Any tort claim documentation;
4. A written statement from the employee explaining the facts and circumstances concerning the incident; and
5. Current regulations governing the proper use and care of Government property.

When a Report of Survey is received in the State Office, a memorandum is sent to the employee offering an opportunity to submit an additional written statement, or to address the Board either in person or by teleconference, with information for their consideration. The statement should explain the purpose for which the property was used, a full description of what happened to the property, and why you, the employee, should not be held financially liable for the loss or damage. This statement is not required, but strongly suggested. An employee who is found financially liable has the right of an appeal to the Office of Appeals and Hearings. In the past, some employees have appealed a Survey Board decision and have included statements which should have been included in the original Report of Survey package. It is imperative that you submit a thorough description of the circumstances of the incident to the property manager when the Report of Survey is initiated. This will often prevent the need for an appeal. The Board of Survey is limited to the information submitted to use in their determination.

If an employee is determined to be financially liable they are sent a letter from the Property Office in Denver. The letter, including a complete copy of the Report of Survey and the Board's determination, tells the employee the amount of their financial liability and instructions for submitting an appeal should they desire to do so.

Financial liability is not considered an adverse personnel action; however, in cases of gross negligence, management may take separate disciplinary actions. Board of Survey determinations and disciplinary actions by supervisors are two completely separate actions and in no way affect each other.

If you have any questions, please contact Joyce Norris, Chief, Branch of Business and Fiscal Services, at (406) 896-5184.

Signed by: Howard A. Lemm, Acting

Authenticated by: Aleta Zahorodny (MT-930)